



# Etosha National Park

"Etosha is magical. From sunrise to long past sunset, the plains and waterholes are places of wonder, drama and diversity. You shouldn't miss it!"

*Michael Sibalatani • Chief Control Warden, the Etosha National Park,  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism*



Republic of Namibia  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism





## Discover the Etosha National Park

One of the greatest wildlife spectacles on earth – herds of elephant, black-maned lions and the world's largest population of rare black rhinos – roam the plains of Etosha, a vast area that is home to 114 large and small animal species and 340 bird species. Savour the thrill of spotting animals hidden in the bush while driving along Etosha's 763 kilometres of open roads. Or simply wait for animals to come to you. Herds of wildebeest, flocks of ostrich and lines of zebra emerge out of the heat haze to drink at one of the seeps found at the edge of the magnificent Etosha Pan. At Etosha's 86 springs, fountains and waterholes, springbok spark, jackal prance, and giraffe approach cautiously as they try to elude Etosha's large predators. At night, you can soak in both the silence and the charged atmosphere at one of Etosha's three floodlit waterholes where you never know what might appear out of the darkness. Take a seat and immerse yourself in Etosha live theatre at its best!

## Tracks in time

The Etosha National Park has a rich and varied history, hidden in rocks and blown away by the sand. Simple animal life existed here more than 650 million years ago before the world was carved into continents. The bones of species forgotten for more than 5 000 years have been found on the edge of Etosha Pan. Among the earliest residents of Etosha, the Hai||om Bushmen understood life on the plains as a matter of survival, complete with harmony and competition. The Hai||om trod lightly, moving nomadically with the game and the seasons, until their history in the park ended abruptly.

Etosha has been the site of battles and triumphs, of man's best and worst moments. Owambo and German soldiers clashed, forts were burned and rebuilt, and even when the Etosha National Park was reduced to a sliver of its original size, its wildlife endured, surviving to begin yet another chapter in Etosha's history.



### **Dramas and distortions – Etosha's dry season**

Dust, heat and a coat of white earth cover the plains. In the distance, mirages shimmer, creating an illusion the Hei||om called 'the devil's cattle', those animals lost in the haze that come close, but never close enough to touch. Wind-blown sand stings the skin, but strangely, visitors don't seem to mind; they are much too preoccupied with the scenes of springbok sparring, of giraffe moving languidly across the plains and of lions waiting patiently for the chance to pounce on unsuspecting prey.

From April to December, Etosha is consumed by the dry season. During these long months, life is drawn to Etosha's many water-holes. Elephants wade into the water to cool down, while rare black rhinos shuffle across the rocks to reach the water's edge. During the bleak but stunning dry season, all of Etosha's animals survive on the fine line of life and death on the edge.

### **Electrifying and life affirming – Etosha's wet season**

Starting in December and running through April, clouds build on the horizon. Slowly, the mass grows. Lightning flashes, thunder rolls and then a towering collection of white and purple clouds dominate the sky. The temperature drops, the wind blows ominously, and suddenly a torrent of rain is unleashed. This spectacle is the hallmark of Etosha's rainy season.

It is a time like no other in the Etosha National Park. The rains herald an explosion of colour on the plains – green grasses, yellow flowers, blue pools. Almost overnight, the plains are teeming with life. Tiny springbok lambs charge across the plains, racing, chasing and pronging as if in celebration. Zebra foals and wildebeest calves are similarly carefree and plentiful. But this is also the time when many predators give birth, so the young antelope must be cautious, or they could end up becoming a meal for another litter.



## Leaders in conservation

For more than 100 years, the Etosha National Park has provided a vast sanctuary for wildlife. Its protective borders have allowed conservationists to implement plans that have helped resident wildlife flourish and other initiatives that have drawn elephants, lions and other creatures deemed too dangerous or destructive to co-exist on neighbouring farms back into the park. The Etosha Pan has provided refuge for scores of greater and lesser flamingos to breed during the wet season. It is a vast, open-air shelter for animals that seek solitude away from predators in the park during the dry season.

Since it opened in 1974, the Etosha Ecological Institute has supported local and international scientists as they explore questions related to animal behaviour, ecology and conservation. Their work is not only vital to Etosha's future, but to the world beyond the park's borders.

Scientific studies on the atmosphere, seismic waves, and infrasound communication have shed new light on how elephants communicate over vast distances. Relocating black-faced impala from Namibia's Kunene Region into the Etosha National Park brought this species back from the brink of extinction. Today half of the world's population of black-faced impala are found in Etosha. Groundbreaking conservation initiatives in the Etosha National Park have led to the establishment of the world's largest population of black rhinos, as well as to a donor population that has secured the species on more than 170 farms in Namibia.

Because wildlife thrives in Etosha, communal conservancies throughout Namibia have benefited from translocations of antelope, giraffe and black rhino back into areas where they formerly resided, spreading the risk, responsibility and rewards that make wildlife conservation unique.



## Environmental Care Code

Kindly respect the fact that the Etosha National Park is a haven for wild animals; you are the visitor. Please adhere to the following while enjoying a memorable trip to this fascinating place:

- Stay on existing roads.
- Do not exceed speed limits.
- Do not get out of your vehicle unless you are at a rest camp or rest area.
- Do not harass or feed the animals.
- Do not litter.
- Follow the park rules and regulations as listed on your permit.

## Facilities:

Accommodation, camping, fuel, curio and basic food shops, information centres and flood-lit waterholes are found at Etosha's three main camps, Okaukuejo, Halali and Namutoni. These camps and the Onkoshi Camp are operated by Namibia Wildlife Resorts ([www.nwr.com.na](http://www.nwr.com.na)).

The Namutoni Environmental Education Centre is available for conferences for up to 40 people. For information contact: NEEC, Private Bag 2014, Tsumeb, Namibia. Bookings can be done at 067-22 9200/1, or by contacting the Warden via e-mail at [nec@mweb.com.na](mailto:nec@mweb.com.na).

## How to get there:

Main roads from all the major towns in Namibia

lead to one of the Etosha's three main entry points: Andersson Gate, Von Lindequist Gate and King Nehale Gate. Etosha is 435 km from Windhoek, Tsumeb is 107 km from Namutoni and Oshakati is 201 km from the King Nehale Gate.

## Fact file:

Size: 22 912 km<sup>2</sup>, making it one of the largest national parks in Africa, with the Etosha Pan, covering 4 730 km<sup>2</sup>, 21% of the park area.  
Proclamation: In 1907 as Game Reserve 2; in 1967 officially named a national park.

[www.met.gov.na](http://www.met.gov.na)

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